

RELAXATION

● ***Progressive Relaxation:*** a deep muscle relaxation technique developed and published by Edmond Jacobson in 1929. He believed that the body responds to anxiety provoking thoughts and events with muscle tension. The tense muscles, in return, increase the feeling of anxiety. Deep muscle relaxation reduces physiological tension, reduces pulse rate and blood pressure, as well as decreasing perspiration and respiration rates.

- ***This technique has been effective in the treatment of muscular tension, anxiety, insomnia, depression, fatigue, irritable bowel, muscle spasms, neck and back pain, high blood pressure, mild phobias, and stuttering.***
- ***Progressive relaxation can be practiced while lying on your back or sitting in a chair with your head supported.*** Each muscle or muscle group is tensed for five seconds and then relaxed for twenty seconds. This procedure is repeated at least once. At first only partial relaxation may occur, but after practice the whole body can relax within a few minutes. (Caution: Do not tense the neck, back, toes, and feet excessively tight. Tensing these may result in muscle cramping.)
- ***Follow the directions below to use the progressive relaxation technique:***
 - 1. Lie on your back with your eyes closed, feet slightly apart, arms slightly away from sides, and palms upward.***
 - 2. Allow your breath to slow down. Put your entire attention on the breath as it moves in and out. (Pause 20 counts.)***
 - 3. Tense the muscles of your feet. (Pause 5 counts and gently relax. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)***
 - 4. Tense the muscles of your calves. (Pause 5 counts. Relax. Let the tension go. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)***
 - 5. Tense the muscles of your stomach. (Pause 5 counts. Relax. Let the tension go. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)***
 - 6. Tense the muscles of your chest. (Pause 5 counts. Relax. Let the tension go. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)***
 - 7. Clench your fists tightly. (Pause 5 counts. Relax. Let the tension go. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)***
 - 8. Tense your elbows and tense your biceps. Hold them tight. (Pause 5 counts. Relax and straighten arms. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)***
 - 9. Tense the muscles of your neck. (Pause 5 counts. Relax. Let the tension go. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)***

10. Tense the muscles of your head and face. (Pause 5 counts. Relax. Let the tension go. Pause 20 counts. REPEAT.)

• **Visualization is a technique which can be used as a part of progressive relaxation or by itself.** If used as a part of progressive relaxation, go into visualization after the body is relaxed.

• **If used by itself, take 3 deep breaths to help slow the body down before using the visualization.** In creating the images, use the words as bait but allow your subconscious to change the image if it wants. **USE AS MANY SENSES AS YOU CAN!** Use your seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and touching senses. Using the senses allows the experience to be as "full" as possible. Soft, soothing music played in the background can add to this experience.

Below Are Two Examples Of Visualization:

1. See a cloud drifting across the sky. Now it's gone. See another and imagine that you are on it, drifting up over the city. As you drift and float, you come to a wooded area where you can hear birds chirping and see animals scurrying about. **(Pause)** You see a stream of water nearby. As you near the water, you notice how gentle, yet consistent the movement of the water is. It is peaceful yet energetic. **(Pause)** Now move away to a large meadow, and in the meadow you can see wildflowers. Look at the lovely colors. **(Pause)** And now begin to drift away from this place, back to the room you are in. **(Pause)** Take in a slow, deep breath, and let it go. (Repeat breathing 3 times.) Open your eyes and stretch.

2. Imagine the sun up above you. With your imagination, pick a beam of sunlight and direct it to move down to your body. Feel the warm glow as the sun's energy helps growth and healing. Take special note to direct this energy to any particular part of the body which feels uncomfortable or ill at ease. **(Pause)** Now select an area of your life that you would like to see grow. Isolate that area, and see it as a seed. **(Pause)** Direct the sunbeam towards this seed with the knowledge that the sun's energy can help its growth and expansion. Let the sun surround and fill the seed with warmth and light. **(Pause)** After a few moments, let the image go. Take a deep breath, and let it go. Repeat breathing 3 times. Open your eyes and stretch.

• **Summary:** So far, the techniques given have emphasized slowing down and reducing excitement. For some, not having excitement can cause stress because the person begins to worry or to get bored and "blue." In this case, having ways to stimulate the individual is important. This can be done in simple ways such as taking a coffee or tea break with someone and having a good conversation, listening to music, reading an inspirational piece, learning something new, or taking a walk.

As The Caregiver, Taking Time To Nurture Yourself Is Essential!

**The above information has been modified from the VIPP Manual, p. 179-192.
To order this manual, write to: The Center on Aging Studies, UMKC, 5125
Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110, or call: (816) 235-1747.**

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